

LEIGHTON BUZZARD
Urban District Council.



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

JOHN ALEX. HEDGES, M.R.C.S., &c.

FOR THE YEAR 1904.

1905.

TO THE
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF
LEIGHTON BUZZARD.



MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I am happy to lay before you my Annual Report for year just closed, a year, which, in its climatic aspect, presented a striking contrast to its predecessor by its very hot summer, ripening the fruits of the earth ; but hardly so conducive to the Public Health as previous year, with its cold and wet. There was more summer Diarrhoea in 1904, and which was singularly absent in 1903.

Births were 144, compared with 170 in year 1903, but very near the number of 148 in 1902, and much exceeding the number of 84 in year 1901. The highest year in the decade was 1895, with 185 births. The number of 144 works out at 22·74 per thousand on a population of 6,331, which is the number given at the census of 1901.

I wish I could give the population as at a higher figure than 1901, but, with unfortunately, so many empty houses, both new and old, I am afraid we cannot boast of an increasing population. From an article in the Public Press lately, the writer considers that, not only the villages, but small towns also, are getting smaller ; whilst the big towns are getting bigger.

As to Deaths, they number 95, or a percentage of 15 per thousand ; but taking off 8 deaths in the Union House (situated in our parish) of persons who had come from the villages adjacent, leaving 87 net Deaths for the Township, or a percentage of 13·74. The lowest Death Rate since 1897 ; of deaths under one year old, the number is 16, or at the rate of 111·11 per thousand of Births registered—rather higher than the two previous years, but much lower than the four previous to that.

Of Zymotic Deaths, three from Whooping Cough, accompanied necessarily by the Broncho-Pneumonia, necessary to make it fatal ; 4 from Phthisis, and 14 from other Tubercular affections ; so the strict Zymotic mortality is merely 0·47. That from Phthisis would work out at ·63, that from other Tubercular affections 2·21. Cancer gives its important contributory of no less than 5—a disease of later life, believed by some pathologists to arise in the first place from some slight fit of indigestion, as a mighty river taking its origin from so small a source that a child's foot could turn it aside. The powers of digestion getting weaker as life advances, and cancer belonging to later life, seem to lend a probability to such theory. The ages of the respective five patients were 49, 59, 62, 77 and 83. Of Heart Disease, eight ; one a child under a year, one at 36, another at 49, the others over 65.

Of Notifications, four during the year, three of whom were Diphtheria, all recoveries, and two of them treated at home, one sent to the Isolation Hospital, one was a child of two and a-half years of age, occurring at a gentleman's lodge in a suburban road near the town. The remaining case, fourth, was one of Small Pox, to whom my attention was drawn by Dr. Worts, as Medical Officer to the Union House. The man being accommodated in the Tramp Wards. I confirmed the diagnosis of Small Pox, and at once ordered him to the Small Pox Hospital erected in the Standbridge Road, and belonging jointly to three Authorities ; he was kept there for some weeks under Dr. Worts' care well into the New Year, till he was safe to be removed ; then the nurses left in quarantine for a suitable time, then discharged, and the building disinfected. On tracing the man's history he was about sixty-five years of age, had been a draper when in business, but had been unfortunate, then taking to tramping the country. He had noticed spots on his body about the middle of November, but on presenting himself at successive Unions, they gave him a night's lodging and sent him off early the next morning before executing his appointed task ; this having happened in about ten or twelve different places ; our Urban Authority, conjointly with the Board of Guardians, made a representation to the Local Government Board, in consequence of which the County Medical Officer was requested to see the man, and would report thereon. That the man should have been detained where his case was first diagnosed seems obvious enough.

On the last day of March, I received a note from the Port Medical Officer at Southampton, to say that a man had proceeded to Leighton, who had come off a steamer which had disembarked at that port, and on which had occurred cases of Plague and Small Pox. The case of Plague had occurred in a coloured man, and had proved fatal, the body being buried at sea. Visiting the man in company with Mr. Stewart, Sanitary Inspector, I found that the death, above referred to, had taken place as much as twenty-two days before the ship landed ; that the ship was a very large one, capable of holding a great many people ; that isolation in this case was most carefully carried out. Disinfectants also had been employed both before and after the death, and no persons would be allowed to leave the ship till quarantine had been sufficiently gone through. Under all these circumstances, there was no risk in the man's coming to Leighton, but I had him under my observation for a time in order to "make assurance doubly sure."

I have dwelt in previous Annual Reports on the striking diminution of (Infectious) Notifiable Diseases in the township, and in this year's Report the lessening is more manifest than ever, owing surely to the strict insistence of hygienic methods, the greater number of properties connected with the new water and sewage works, the inspection of and correction of nuisances (wherever found), where defective surface water drains (old sewers) have been discovered, I have strongly recommended them to be opened up and re-laid to a proper fall, and the foul matter contaminating them removed.

I have pressed forward the desirability of connections with the new works, and where there were no surface-water drains, I have urged the Council to make new ones, and thereby removing a great source of *dampness*, so opposed to the general health.

I have, in company with the Inspector, made house to house inspection now and again during the year, and the following is the list—the defective drains were eight in number; after writing to the owner, they were put into a good state and re-laid. Blockings of drains were three in number, and which were mostly at the intercepting chamber; this number of three is only a very small percentage, considering the number now in use throughout the town.

SWINE KEEPING.

Where swine were kept within the regulation distance, viz.: 50 feet, by our Bye-laws, we had them abolished, and where they were beyond the regulation distance (that is consistently with the Bye-laws), they were duly examined into as to being left clean. Defective, uneven floors (not possible to be left clean) were required to be reconstructed with impervious material, and, further, they were required to be connected with Council's Sewer.

Of defective privies, I am glad to say we have but few, but what there are, we make the tenants keep them clean.

Dumb wells are required to be emptied at short periods, which are not allowed to exceed three months.

OVERCROWDING.

I have paid special attention to this, and have had ten families removed into larger houses, but this sometimes is difficult to get done, as wages rule low here, whilst children in the lower classes are numerous, and the higher rent for a larger house is, in many cases, impracticable for financial reasons. I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to get the parents to put the older children out to sleep, or get them into situations, where they can leave the parents' house, thus lessening the number of inmates and relieving the overcrowding.

INSANITARY DWELLINGS.

My attention has been called to 22 houses—the yards, privies, &c., being in an insanitary condition. The owners were served with notice to connect with Council's sewer and water-supply, abolish existing privies, and rebuild new water closets, pave their yards with impervious material, consistently with a proper fall, and have the gullies properly trapped.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS ACT.

About 40 in number in this District—including about 11 Bakehouses (all above ground that are in use), the rest are Millinery and Dressmaking Establishments, Shoemakers' Shops, &c. I have visited same, and seen that proper whitewashing, ventilation, and w.-c. arrangements are satisfactory. I caused one tailor's shop to be thoroughly cleansed, white-washed, and, further, I caused a new w.c. to be built. At a blacksmith's shop I found there was no sanitary provision for the men, so I at once gave notice for a new w.c. to be built in connection with the Council's sewer. and which order, I am happy to say, was duly carried out.

LODGING HOUSES

Have been regularly visited during the year by myself, together with the Inspector. These houses are all connected with the Council's sewer. The lodging house in Friday street has been thoroughly renovated.

The cleansing of the markets has had my constant supervision, and the methods adopted have given entire satisfaction, both to the Police Authorities and to the Board of Agriculture, whose Inspectors now visit and inspect regularly. The excreta of animals removed at once and disinfectants employed. Before leaving the subjects of markets, I may add, that although the hot summer of 1904 yeilded a very prolific fruit supply, yet in not one single case did we find any unsound fruit exposed for sale.

The whole of the slaughter houses in the district have now been connected with the Council's sewer.

REMOVAL OF NIGHT-SOIL.

During the year I had to report a case in which night-soil from one of the privies had been deposited in the inspection chamber behind some houses thereby blocking the sewer and causing a condition seriously prejudicial to health. It took a good deal of trouble and employment of labour to correct this very gross error and get the sewer thus blocked into working order again. The offender was severely cautioned by the Council, and his being ready to make compensation, no further notice was taken of it, and no repetition of this great mistake has occurred at all.

VENTILATING COLUMNS.

To the number of 14 have had two coats of paint this year. Complaints of two columns—the one at Chains Bridge, the other near the Town Hall—being nuisances, were received and attended to. The former was raised, and a system of de-odorants was supplied to each. Since then no complaint has been heard. A complaint was received with regard to a column in another part of the town, but was conclusively proved to be of an imaginary foundation.

FLUSHING OF SEWERS.

This has been regularly and thoroughly done once every week, and the quantity of water used for this purpose has been 399,000 gallons.

SEWAGE WORKS.

During the year guagings have been taken of the quantity of sewage treated, and find that the daily average has been 62,300 gallons, but on flushing days this has been increased (as would be expected) to 72,800 gallons. The whole of this flow has been dealt with by means of the sprinklers, regularly and evenly, although it is received at the works intermittently.

SCAVENGING.

This method of aiding the Public Health, adopted some years ago by your Council, continues to prove its utility a thousandfold. Collected as the trade and house refuse is from some 1,600 houses, it is removed from the town and deposited in a disused pit at a considerable distance outside. I should feel more satisfied if (instead of depositing and waiting for the chances of having it dug into the ground) it were subjected to the sanitary influence of *fire* and burnt in a destructor. I am not without hope that the Council will see their way to such desirable *completion* of the wholesome scavenging.

The system of sewage disposal through Shone's ejectors, thus conveyed to the outfall works, and there treated before the effluent is allowed to pass into the River Ousel, has been so thoroughly dealt with in previous Annual Reports as to leave no further detail necessary.

OUR WATER SUPPLY.

No purer in England, continues to be (in relation to its promotion of Public Health) of indescribable value and usefulness. Descriptions in previous Annual Reports of our embarrassment by the water containing protocarbonate of iron, becoming (immediately on exposure to the atmosphere), the red per-oxide of iron, were duly detailed; and further, how by an ingenious invention, the iron was abstracted through the use of Polarite. We had an experience in the course of the summer of how the said Polarite wanted cleaning, which was duly carried out, and the water continues to be produced in all its splendid purity. Otherwise, during this process of cleaning, we noticed, to our dismay, the old muddy look of the water, which, however, soon gave way to clearness.

Whilst lamenting the number of empty houses in the town, one cannot help, like "the warrior sniffing the battle from afar," thinking the desirability of Leighton as a residential town, is coming into recognition. People have come here on knowing that the Railway Company instituted cheap week-end tickets in the past summer; and the attractiveness of the place has been considerably enhanced by the addition to the Recreation Ground, now being so picturesquely laid out. We shall hope for better things later on as the place gets more known, and, as a necessary consequence, more appreciated by the public.

The four Tables of Health Statistics required by the Local Government are here appended :—

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1904 and previous Years.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.		TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.				Deaths in Public Institu- tions.	Deaths of Non-Residents registered in district.	Deaths of Residents registered beyond District	DEATHS AT ALL AGES NETT.	
		Number.	Rate.*	Under 1 year of age.		At all ages.					Number	Rate.*
				Number.	Rate per 1000 Births registered.	Number.	Rate.*					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1894	6592	151	22·9	28	185·43	129	19·56	17	9		120	18·20
1895	6554	182	27·76	23	126·42	109	16·63	17	8		101	15·41
1896	6517	169	25·93	16	94·67	87	13·34	12	6		81	12·42
1897	6480	139	21·45	9	64·74	93	14·35	16	6		87	13·42
1898	6442	170	26·38	27	158·82	115	17·85	27	14		101	15·67
1899	6408	150	23·40	18	120·00	129	20·13	25	16		113	17·63
1900	6370	141	21·97	21	148·93	105	16·48	21	9		96	15·07
1901	6331	84	13·26	20	238·00	111	17·53	15	7		104	16·42
1902	6331	148	23·42	14	84·39	103	16·26	16	13		90	14·21
1903	6331	170	26·85	16	94·11	94	14·84	15	10		94	14·84
Averages for years 1894- 1903	6435·6	150·4	23·25	19·2	131·55	107·5	16·69	17·6	9·8		98·7	
1904	6331	144	22·74	16	111·11	95	15	18	8		87	13·74

* Rates calculated per 1,000 of estimated population.

NOTE.—The deaths to be included in Column 7 of this table are the whole of those registered during the year as having actually occurred within the district or division. The deaths to be included in Column 12 are the number in Column 7, corrected by the subtraction of the number in Column 10 and the addition of the number in Column 11.

By the term "Non-residents" is meant persons brought into the district on account of illness, and dying there; and by the term "Residents" is meant persons who have been taken out of the district on account of illness, and have died elsewhere.

Total population at all ages 6331		} At Census of 1901.
Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water). } 13605	Number of inhabited houses 1630	
	Average number of persons per house ... 3.8	

Vital Statistics of separate Localities in 1904 and previous years.

YEAR.			Population estimated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year.
1894	...	...	6592	151	129	28
1895	...	...	6554	182	109	23
1896	...	...	6517	169	87	16
1897	...	...	6480	139	93	9
1898	...	...	6442	170	115	27
1899	...	...	6408	150	129	18
1900	...	...	6370	141	105	21
1901	...	...	6331	84	111	20
1902	...	...	6331	148	103	14
1903	...	...	6331	170	94	16
Averages of Years 1894 to 1903		...	6435.6	150.4	107.5	19.2
1904	...	...	6331	144	95	16

Causes and Ages of all Deaths during Year 1904.

		All ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.
Whooping-cough	...	3	1	2	...	...	...	...
Diarrhoea	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Phthisis	...	4	...	...	...	...	3	1
Other tubercular diseases	...	14	5	2	2	...	5	...
Cancer (malignant disease)	...	5	...	...	...	...	3	2
Bronchitis	...	14	3	1	...	...	2	8
Pneumonia	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Premature birth	...	2	2	...	...	...	...	...
Diseases and accidents of parturition	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Heart diseases	...	8	1	...	...	...	2	5
Accidents	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...
All other causes	...	41	1	4	...	...	11	25
All causes	...	95	16	10	2	...	26	41

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year 1904.

	At all ages.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.	65 and upwards.	No of cases removed to Hospital from each locality.
Small-pox	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	1
Cholera	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diphtheria	3	...	1	2	...	...	...	1
Membranous croup	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Scarlet fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Typhus fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Enteric fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Relapsing fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Continued fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerperal fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Plague	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	4	1	2	1	1	1	2	2

NOTES.—The localities adopted for this table should be the same as those in Tables II. and IV.

State the name of the isolation hospital, if any, used by the sick district. Mark (H) the locality in which it is situated, or if not within the district, state where it is situated, and in what district Grovebury Isolation Hospital for general infectious cases, and a Small-Pox Hospital, jointly with two other districts, on the Standbridge Road.

Hoping this survey of the year's town history and sanitary work will prove interesting and satisfactory to the Council.

I have the honour to remain,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

J. A. HEDGES,

Medical Officer of Health.